

Open Letter to Administration on today's Hamilton Forum event

To the members of the Senior Leadership Group:

We recognize that you are stretched thin right now with all of the important work on your plate, specifically regarding key anti-racist initiatives. However, as a group of concerned students, we want to convey our sentiments about the upcoming Alexander Hamilton Forum (AHF) debate on slavery scheduled to take place today, Thursday October 1 at 4:45 PM.

According to the poster which we have attached to this email, the debate topic is titled, "1619 or 1776: Was America Founded on Slavery?" This is a topic that should absolutely not be up for debate, so we are wondering why nothing has been said about it by the administration. In the approximate words of one of the members of the SGA Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion committee, "Everything from the wording to the topic being discussed embodies racism. To imply and encourage people to debate whether this country was built off the backs of slaves stolen from their homeland is blatantly disrespectful and promotes racist dialogue. This country's economic, political and social structure is built on the oppression of Black people; this event is a continuation of it on a campus/local level." The research of one of the invited speakers, Lucas Morel, denies the oppressive history of this country and continues to put forth the idea that the United States was not built on white supremacy. At a time when the College has committed more seriously than ever to anti-racist practices, why are such forums of dialogue still permitted on our campus? Why is the silence surrounding the Hamilton Forum still deafening?

If Middlebury is to hold itself accountable, it must prohibit the presence of white supremacy in the academic conversations that take place in and out of the classroom. Anti-racism requires the prioritization of BIPOC (and in this case, specifically Black) students over "freedom of speech," which in the case of this event is extremely harmful to members of our community. We are committed to ensuring that such conversations have no space in this community and that everyone knows that they belong here. This is unequivocally more important than upholding the AHF's guise of academic expression and "intellectual freedom."

At what point do we take a stand and demand that care for the Black members of our community—including students, who have been walking around this campus for weeks now seeing posters denying the brutal history of slavery, and by extension, their lived realities—is more important than hosting inflammatory debates about basic historical facts? When will we finally stand in solidarity with our Black students, faculty, and staff who bring Middlebury so much of its beloved diversity and inclusion, but who are being told that the history of racial oppression is up for debate by "scholarly" white academics? Frankly, it is unacceptable. If Middlebury College is truly committed to becoming an anti-racist institution, the administration must end its silence on the Alexander Hamilton Forum. Every day you remain silent, more harm occurs to the Black community on campus. We implore you, as the Senior Leadership Group, to make a public statement acknowledging the harm of this event and the importance of acknowledging the realities of slavery.



For these reasons, we are supporting a resistance campaign organized by Sunday Night Environmental Group Co-Managers Claire Contreras '22.5 and Divya Gudur '21. Over the course of the day yesterday, the resistance message spread rapidly across social media platforms, indicating that many students are upset about this event. In addition, volunteers helped to put up posters around campus as a counter message. We urge a public response from the administration explaining why an event so antithetical to our core values is happening on our campus today. We urge you to break your silence and acknowledge the harm that this event has caused before it has even happened.

Name

Your answer

Affiliation (position, class year, involvement)

Your answer

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

This form was created inside of Middlebury. [Report Abuse](#)

Google Forms

